



West Virginia

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Newsletter

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A Higher Re-purposing

By Jeff Gilleas



Elizabeth Meehan competing aboard her OTTB Meehan Meehan. Emily Ballenger photo

"The future depends on what you do today." Gandhi

In all of my years spent on the third planet from the sun, I have come to accept one universal belief, regardless of religious affiliation, self-sacrifice is the reason why we are here and the fundamental key to unlocking our humanity.

When I heard of a local contingent of crusaders taking on the challenge of the Thoroughbred Makeover-Retired Racehorse Project, the largest retraining competition in the world, it became a moral imperative to communicate on their behalf.

In an era where acceptance of negativity is pervasive and

the faultfinding eyes of the world are fixated upon our sport, this occurrence captures the essence of boosting education, productive retraining and the continuing welfare of our equine partners.

Sponsored by the Thoroughbred Charities of America and held at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Ky., this event is open to recently retired ex-racehorses alongside those who love and protect their legacy.

Founded by a small group of dedicated individuals 10 years ago, this year over 800 applicants from assorted equine labors will vie for the top prize in building bridges to second careers.

Our powerful forecasters for modification and betterment of the industry are Katie Crews, Kelsie Figgins, Elizabeth Meehan and Allie Renzulli.

FEELING USEFUL IS THE GIFT WE GRANT ONE ANOTHER

Katie Crews' saga is patterned after a long line of female pioneers that have plied their trade at the Charles Town Races.

Similar to many of her counterparts Katie had a passion for horses at an early age and learned how to gallop while breaking babies in South Carolina.

"Once at the racetrack, I grew weary of watching the boys getting all the glory on my best-loved horses and in 2007 started my career as a jockey in Maryland. My favorite aspect of riding was trying to figure out what made each individual tick and deciphering their mind games. I retired in 2017 and went back to school to further my education. Upon witnessing my friend, Elizabeth Meehan and prestigious Rosie Napravnik involved with the RRP, it lit a fire in me to also compete.

"The horse I am taking to the competition is Believe the Heat, who I lovingly refer to as Peter Pan. He has a mischievous personality, but is super amusing. I had scheduled to bring him last year, however as everyone knows the RRP was postponed due to Covid-19 concerns."

HER HEART SHINES BRIGHTEST FOR HER EQUINE ATHLETES

Kelsie Figgins was the fortunate recipient of being born into a large family, where horses and animals made every day an adventure. The daughter of multiple graded stakes-winning trainer Ollie Figgins III, Kelsie and her sisters literally grew up on the back of a horse. As a teenager she gained an increased appreciation for their four-legged friends and a mature mindset for the value of rehoming.

Kelsie and her sister Emilie recently started their own business enterprise titled: Figgins Off-Track Thoroughbreds. Since it's inception they are credited with re-purposing 13 individuals.

Kelsie and her sister know the intense demands of racetrack life, but hope to partake in this year's Retired Racehorse Project. Kelsie's entries are two West Virginia-breds named King of the Blues and I Need You.

The latter, a former weary claimer, deserved a break from racing and found a good home in the arms of a diminutive horse fancier.

THE ABILITY TO START OVER IS ONE OF OUR GREATEST GIFTS

Elizabeth Meehan was born and raised on a farm and being petite in size, but certainly not stature, followed in her mother's equestrian footsteps.

She had her first pony by the age of 7 and purchased a racehorse off the track at 11 years old.

"Growing up as a member of the United States Pony Club, it seemed natural to teach horses a second career, namely jumping, fox hunting, eventing and showing. The fundamental disciplines of the Club were horsemanship and sportsmanship and at 16 I carried those principles with me to the racetrack. To this day, I continue to watch particular horses with a second career match in mind. In 2017, I attended my first

Thoroughbred Makeover with a gelding I owned, trained and bred. Meehan Meehan provided myself, my daughter and my sister so much joy that I am going back this year with a horse I received from Mr. Casey named Luff Songs."

IT IS NOT THE AMOUNT OF TIME WE LIVE, IT'S WHAT WE DO WITH IT

Allie Renzulli may be new to West Virginia, but not horses, as they have consumed her spirit since the age of 5.

"They were the only thing I would talk about as a child and my parents finally gave in and allowed me to take lessons. I've always had a special love for Thoroughbreds and have been fortunate to be in a position to provide them opportunities to transition into new careers. After college, I worked for Ballyclare Farm, where I gained an invaluable amount of knowledge caring for, riding and rehabbing a variety of Thoroughbreds off the racetrack. I eventually branched out on my own to create Renzulli Racehorse Restarts. Hopefully, I'll be participating in the TB Makeover hosted by the Retired Racehorse Project. Being able to showcase these magnificent animals in such a beautiful venue is remarkable. Thoroughbreds give so much during their racing life it is urgent to share a second career with them. Surrounded by a devoted community of horsemen and horsewomen makes this a dream."

Special thanks go to Elizabeth Meehan and Amanda Moro, as their exploits continue to inspire me.

They have discovered that real purpose is revealed through and enriched in the service of others.

Benefits of Owning a WV-Bred and/or -Sired racehorse

Some of the best incentives in the nation:

- A minimum of three accredited races are written every day at Charles Town exclusively for registered WV-bred and/or -sired horses.
- West Virginia has the only program in the country that permits horses to win state-bred races that do not count against the horse's lifetime open conditions.
- The WV Thoroughbred Development Fund distributes almost \$5 million to breeders, owners, and sire owners of accredited WV-bred and/or -sired horses based the horse's annual earnings at Charles Town and Mountaineer Park racetracks.
- The West Virginia Breeders Classics pays out almost \$1 million in purses for WV-bred and/or -sired horses. It is held annually on the second Saturday in October.
- \$800,000 in purses are allocated for up to 16 WV accredited stakes races during the year.
- Supplemental Purse Awards of up to 10% of the winner's share of the purse to the owner, breeder, and/or sire owner of the accredited WV-bred and/or -sired winner.
- West Virginia offers year-round racing with approximately 300 race days per year.

West Virginia Thoroughbred Breeders Association

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